

[John Hardgreaves Crawford]

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EARLY SETTLEMENT

Mrs. Ada Davis, P. W.

McLennen County, Texas.

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A. Interview with John Hardgreaves Crawford, Elk, Texas. Review of Early Central Texas Cattle Raising [.]

By - John Hardgreaves Carwford.

Mr. Crawford had his first experience in cow hunting in 1867 and 1868. His equipment was a pony and saddle. The saddle was supplied with buck-skin strings to hold provisions and bedding. The equipment included a wallet which had one end sewed up, it was split in the middle, one end contained biscuit and the other raw bacon. There were no coffee, buckets, cups or pots; no shortening in the bread, there was a crust on all sides of the biscuits, these biscuits were cooked hard and after a week or ten days they were soft. This wallet was tied to the back of the saddle. Bedding consisted of a pair of blankets wrapped inside of the saddle blanket and put on the horse. Cowboy rode on top. The

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horse was staked at night with a long rope made from a cow's or horse's tail. Cowboys always traveled south, because the cattle drifted south from about ten to thirty miles. The round-up would take a week. Cattle were collected in big lots at neighbors. The cowboys would stake their horses on the grass; eat biscuit and bacon, broiled on a stick, and sleep on the ground. Several men, seven, eight or more, would go together to hunt for their cattle which had drifted. Each man would have his cattle's ears marked and branded so they could be identified. For instance, if two men had the same brand they could tell their cattle by the ear marks. crop, right, cut off right tip of ear. Split left under bit. Brands B. 3, circle H, and others. C12 - Texas 2 The cowboys would travel on south, in the same manner. They could tell about how far to go by the winter weather, if the weather was bad, they would not go so far. After they reached their destination, the boys would go back a different route and probably find more cattle. After they had reached a certain point, they would separate the cattle and go home. After marking and branding the calves, they would pen the calves and let the cows run out all day. Often the tame cattle came home and brought range cattle with them. Since the cattle would tramp down the grass, it was necessary to build new lots the next winter and use the old ones for fields and gardens. These lots consisted of three, round pens. Cattle were marked and branded in one pen, cows milked in another pen, and calves put into the third. These were big lots, covering from one to two acres. Cattle were penned to keep clean places for them to lie down, and to tramp down the grass, etc.

Marks and brands were put on record at the Court House. A general round up was held about the 15th of April; beef cattle, when fat, were sold about August 1st, to buyers from Shreveport, Louisiana. Steers brought from \$12.50 to \$20.00 each, owing to the size and flesh. Buyers paid in twenty dollar gold pieces, right on the prairie. They bought by the head and didn't weigh the steers. Buyers rode through the drove of cattle and made the price. If the ranchmen didn't like the price offered, they would wait for the next buyer. Heifers and milk cows were seldom sold because cattlemen did not want their brand

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scattered. If heifers and milk cows were sold, they cancelled their brand by drawing a line through it with a red 3 hot iron.

By 1870, there were many improvements, among these were; a pack-jack for bedding, plenty of buckets, coffee pots, frying pans, ropes, better saddles, from which cowboys could rope cattle. Cowboys would travel through the prairie, and when they found cattle belonging to their ranch they drove them home. There were round-ups. But they followed the same schedule. In early days, the cowboys made rope of raw-hide. Ordinary rope and saddle rope was of four [plaits?]. Every cowboy carried a six shooter or two, a quirt which was an iron-handled, four [plaited?], raw-hide rope, three feet long, which was used, when the cattle ran too slowly, to make them run faster.

The ranch horses were also branded, usually on the shoulder. Cowboys were often known by the ranch brand. Then spurs were introduced. To brand the cattle they would stamp the iron letter to blacken it; then build a fire, heat these irons, throw the cattle down, and press branding iron on hip, or side, or shoulder. A running iron was used later; this was something like a wagon rod and was a faster method which could be put on any part of the body of the cattle. They also used a knife to brand. There were no matches, so flint rock was used to start a fire. Water was scarce. There were no tanks, and nothing with which to build them. Often cowboys carried cattle from eight to fifteen miles to water. They doctored cattle some but not much. Western Texas in 1878

Cattle often drifted a hundred miles. During the spring round-up cattle were gathered as before. It required a month or six weeks for 4 each round-up. The ranch outfits would start about the first of May; they used a wagon equipped with a grub box, the lid of this box was used for a table. Provisions were kept in the box. They ate beans, bacon, coffee and killed and cooked a calf every two or three days. Made coffee in buckets. Had a boss over the cook wagon. They built a fire in a trench and threw branding irons across this on which vessels were placed to cook. They cooked a big pot of beans, or stew and put a big spoon or fork in it. Each ranch-hand helped himself to the coffee, bread and stew, then

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they would go off fifteen or twenty feet from the fire to eat. They would get their bed and make it down by their saddles. Saddles were used as pillows. Horses were hobbled out for the night. In the mornings they would roll the bed up and tie it with the hobbling rope. A tarpaulin was used to keep rain, wind and water off. They usually slept with their boots on. The horse used in the round-up was a good strong one. Cowboys would round-up cattle and then change horses to separate the cattle. To cut out the cattle from different ranches, or to cut out the cattle to be sold, a specially trained horse, known as a "cutting horse" was used. This horse was so sensible, so quick in his movements and so well trained that he was very valuable and was never used for any other purpose. The "cutting horse" would wind his way in and out through the largest herds, quickly turning and dodging the cattle to force a particular steer out of the milling herd. By using the "cutting horse" cowboys were able to separate the cattle in to different owner's groups. 5 Then the outfit went on with the wagon to the next ranch and there repeated the performance. Later round-ups were held to brand the cattle.

Roping horses were especially trained for use in roping calves or cattle to be branded. This was a quick, sensible horse and especially trained to stop quickly when the rope hit the cow aimed for. If the rope was on the cow, the cow would run until it reached the end of the rope, then the sudden stop would throw the cow. These ponies were trained to brace themselves against the jerk given by the cow. The other cowboys would catch the animal over the back and by the legs and throw it on the side. Another cowboy with the red hot branding iron would quickly slap it on the animal, thus burning the brand into its flesh. This place would be sore several days. When healed, the hairless scar carried the print of the owner's brand. Roping horses were not used for running. Horses which had been found to see real well at night were used for night riding on the herds. (A)